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The Dark End of Day

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The Dark End of Day

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Playwrighting

by

Whitney Buss

B.A. University of New Orleans 2005

December 2009

THE DARK END OF DAY

“A drama.”

by

Whitney Lee Buss

CAST OF CHARACTERS

George, in his mid sixties
Molina, his very old dog
Luca, in her mid to late thirties
James, in his late thirties

TIME

Present, the fall.

PLACE

Not specified.

Playwright's Intent: Molina is played by a woman. As spoken in the script she is dignified, loved, intelligent, wise, and relied upon. Molina is also referred to as being very old. In my first conception she was dressed in all black like a mime, with further thought that choice seemed limiting. There is something magical about her role in the play, and she needs be recreated. However, it's imperative the previous list of character qualities are always present.

SCENE ONE.

SETTING. GEORGE'S home. A redwood porch upstage left. Across the front of the porch are three long wide steps. On the upstage side of the porch is a handrail and a built in bench that ends at a screen door. There are potted flowering plants (pinks, purples, oranges) on the floor of the porch, on the edges of some of the steps, and planted ivies hang along the handrail.

JAMES' and LUCA'S home. A suggestive living area downstage right. Furthest stage right is an expensive looking, though weathered, brown stuffed armchair and matching ottoman. An end table and lamp sit next to it. There are a few house plants. The room ends at a free hanging window frame slightly more onstage, it's at a subtle angle facing GEORGE'S house. Outside the window is a garden indicated by an outdoor cement decorative bench.

MOLINA'S watering hole. A stream down left-center.

AT RISE. A late afternoon in October, near dusk. GEORGE, visible through his screen door, types away at a manuscript. Classical music plays, he occasionally takes a drink.

MOLINA sits near the watering hole watching LUCA in her home. LUCA, wearing work clothes, stands holding a bucket of paint with a brush in it. She takes in the room with consideration. JAMES, dressed smartly, enters. She stops him and shows him the bucket.

LUCA

A color, what do you think?

JAMES

Seaweed.

She looks into to the bucket then back at him.

Or sea-foam maybe. Look here Luca-

He gestures toward the window.

Why not a light driftwood. Or maybe an icy birch.

Grabbing a large book off the ottoman, he exits. LUCA stands in silence. The classical music swells. MOLINA rises and heads toward home. GEORGE, appearing a little tipsy, enters through the screen door. He is dressed ruggedly, is robust and moves lightly. He's holding a cocktail and a watering can. MOLINA arrives at the porch and takes a place on the steps. LUCA exits with the paint. GEORGE waters the plants for a moment then puts down the watering can and drink and picks up a silver food bowl. The bowl is filled with dry dog food, as he shakes it, it creates a sort of maraca sound. SHAKE, shake, shake, SHAKE. MOLINA lifts her head. GEORGE continues shaking the bowl of food.

GEORGE

Molina.

SHAKE, shake, shake, SHAKE.

I see you.

SHAKE, shake, shake, SHAKE.

What's that now?

SHAKE, shake, shake, SHAKE. He waits.

Not hungry, not yet? At your old age it's important that you eat. Don't say I didn't try, it's my job my girl, to keep you nourished. We'll put this over here, maybe later my love.

GEORGE picks up the watering can,

the drink, and waters the plants again.

What a smell, what a smell.

Now referring to the drink.

What a smell. Drink thirsty devils, drink!

Watering one of the plants and taking a drink himself.

Ah Molina, a day it is. Fall fills the air, and summer's fragrance blooms. What's that my poor old friend?

He kneels beside her.

The music's too loud for you? Here Molina, how about a drink?

He offers her the watering can.

No? No water for my flower.

He offers her the drink.

This? I know my Molina, she likes her water stiff.

Setting down the watering can, he strokes her face.

Dear girl, the music is too loud for you, a pain on those poor old ears. Why we can barely talk. You lay here Molina, I'll fix it.

GEORGE exits. At the sound of the screen door closing, MOLINA takes a long stretch and gazes in that direction. She continues looking at the door until the music is gone then, as if having seen GEORGE ready to make his return, she closes her eyes. GEORGE enters.

Who needs music when I can serenade you.

He sits next to MOLINA and kisses her face then sings to the tune of "Maria" from "West Side Story."

"Molina,
I've just kissed a girl named Molina,

and suddenly I've found
how wonderful a sound can be--"

He stops. Pause. Staring out.

Her eyes. I can't remember.

He drinks.

That's right we were three, but three minus one equals two, and that's you, and that's me.

He deals an imaginary deck of cards.

Pick a card young lady, any card. What? Not young? That means nothing to me. Why here, let's see, I'll bet you grabbed a queen. A queen for a queen. And what's next? My, my, my, a ten for a ten. Two good in a row, now try again for three, let's see... a nine. A nine is fine. A nine times seven, dog years, puts you at the ripe young age of sixty three.

He strokes her.

If only that were the truth. Look here old girl, can you see me? Tell me something Molina. No one lives as long as you and doesn't know more than the rest of us. And no stock answers.

Leaning in he listens to her.

"Blindness has its benefits; you don't have to see the truth."

He listens to her again. Pause. He nods.

He drinks. The yellow and red colors of evening start to light the porch.

Is seeing believing? She was right there in front of me.

He drinks.

Her face was so beautiful, until she would deform it with confusion. I liked to call her Apricot. Even the seed in the center of the fruit seemed comparable. A peach colored beauty with a brain hard and full of crevices.

He drinks.

I can't remember the perfect color of her-

GEORGE stands, finishes the drink, and exits.

Fucking dusk.

The screen door slams. MOLINA, startled, watches GEORGE through the screen door. LUCA, carrying the paint bucket, walks downstage of her home and arrives at her garden. MOLINA rises and exits quickly. LUCA begins to clean the brush but stops and gazes at the sunset. MOLINA enters LUCA'S garden. LUCA seems pleasantly surprised. GEORGE enters the porch with a full drink. MOLINA beckons LUCA to follow her. She does.

Settling now it comes to this, the absence of light. You're not scared of the night George.
GEORGE takes a drink then throws it at the screen door.

What color were her eyes? A thousand pictures and not one of them show the exact-
Days, I've gone through nights without you, there is joy, there is no joy, the music will
play, it plays, but Christ, God, why her? Where are your eyes? I've seen nothing without
your eyes, I've seen nothing but your eyes, why?

Standing at the edge of the porch, he attacks the changing light.

This desperate hour every day, and I lose you again. I watch the day die, I watched your
life leave your eyes, and it is so black. You gone is evil inside grief. Where is my wife?
Where is my wife! Not this, I wanted to, I wanted to go, I should have gone- Molina.
Molina?

GEORGE goes to the edge of the porch and stops.

Molina. Dear God my dog.

Beat.

Molina? Molina! Molina its dark, where have you gone? Molina you're old, you're deaf
my girl come back, the night's no place Molina. Hear me with those ears. Molina!
Molina, find your way, you don't need your eyes in the black, pick a trail, the way you
left my girl.

GEORGE, sobbing, collapses.

Bring her home. Not my, and not my, Molina! Molina.

*MOLINA and LUCA enter unnoticed.
MOLINA crosses to GEORGE and strokes
his head with her cheek, he takes her in his
arms. LUCA watches quietly. The sky
grows dark. JAMES, holding a newspaper,
enters their home and switches on the table
lamp. He looks out the window, LUCA
exits.*

SCENE TWO

JAMES stands sits in the armchair and opens the newspaper. LUCA enters from stage right humming the music heard earlier. Her entrance into the room goes unrecognized by JAMES. She exits, still humming, then returns a few moments later with a small glass of port wine. She walks to the window and looks out.

LUCA

I've been humming, haven't you noticed?

JAMES

I wouldn't have noticed a drum right now.

LUCA

Did you get any work done?

No response.

I walked, to give you room.

JAMES

Is that why you walked?

Beat.

LUCA

Tomorrow could be better, should be, might be.

JAMES

Haven't a chance for a thought of that today.

LUCA

Haven't a chance at remembering either.

JAMES

Forgetting is hot liquid substance on a very hot day, natural easy evaporation.

LUCA

Two things I'm tired of, having to remember and life without music.

JAMES

No one forces you to remember.

Beat.

Why say there is no music when you were humming.

LUCA

No one noticed my hum.

JAMES

As it was just now mentioned, you stop to say that no one noticed your hum?

LUCA

In the past.

JAMES

Recent enough.

LUCA

You can't live in the past

JAMES

Only moments ago does not-

LUCA

The past. Make an observation of now.

Beat.

JAMES

Your beautiful.

LUCA

Beginning to age.

*JAMES leaves the newspaper and goes to
LUCA.*

JAMES

You're not humming.

LUCA

But thinking of a tune.

JAMES

Music. The interlude comes in the distance, unrecognizable but a drum.

Beat.

A drum in there is included, it sounds out, pulls recognition, gives definition. Oh, the impact of a drum.

LUCA

Passion from a reasonable man.

JAMES

The strings play too, but not so distinguished. It's the drum that completes the choir. Thunder. An entrance. Now I hear your hum. I hear it.

LUCA

The drum grows faint and is leaving.

JAMES

The drum stays on.

LUCA

The drum grows faint and is leaving. That wasn't my hum.

JAMES

That was my hum.

LUCA

No longer it's over.

JAMES

No longer it never began.

Beat.

LUCA

Never began! Never began? If this never began, then where does it find itself now? Somewhere near the end.

JAMES

Somewhere at the beginning.

LUCA

You can't begin again when something has already started.

JAMES

You can't end it either.

LUCA

You can change the tune.

JAMES

What if you like the old one?

LUCA

What if the old one was never there.

JAMES

Maybe it played quietly in the back ground.

LUCA

That kind of interlude cannot sustain.

JAMES

After the interlude there is commotion, there are wars. But then a serenade. The drum always return.

LUCA

Only to slow down the process.

JAMES sits in the armchair and reads the newspaper.

JAMES

Did you say something?

No response.

They're looking forward to a vast migration. More butterflies this year than ever before.

LUCA

Ever before?

JAMES

An expression. It's a delicate process-

LUCA

Expressions?

JAMES

Migration, movement, moving. There're interruptions. Wind, rain.

Beat.

Fragile things. Butterflies. And no other option. Stay here, freeze?

LUCA

They won't make it through the winter, a dreadful winter on the way.

JAMES

But we will.

LUCA

A butterfly breeze, now that would be something. Give them all an even float, fly their little wings south before winter.

JAMES

Winter I don't mind much. It's the nature of things. An exchange of moody warm weather for cool reason? The perfect time of year to settle with a book, personal retrospection, and red sauce.

He laughs.

Oh, and rest! Those long, dark nights. I sleep like a rock in the winter.

LUCA

Books, newspapers, red sauce.

Beat.

I would say a short prayer for each butterfly but I'm afraid there'd be no time to talk. As a girl they'd arrive where I lived shortly after the rainy season, late fall, after leaving here they'd arrive. Standing outside, I'd name each one of them as fast as they flew by. A

word would fall out: Jennifer, John, Jessie, Joseph, Julie, Juliet-

JAMES

You can't live in the past.

LUCA

At this point it's history.

JAMES

Funny, I don't seem to remember the laws of functional biology including "J" names for butterflies.

LUCA

They'd fly by in the rainy season, drops the size of apricots-

JAMES

Apricots?

LUCA

Small imported apricots. The drops fell from the sky mid morning, mid afternoon in sunshine, and sometimes all evening long.

JAMES

The butterflies liked it there?

LUCA

They'd hide when the rain hit and then continued on. Continue to a place they've never been.

Beat.

JAMES

With light.

LUCA

Sorry?

JAMES

The migration navigates their journey using light.

LUCA stands at the window.

LUCA

It's getting dark.

Beat.

JAMES

Luca, I'll let you go.

She's still at the window.

LUCA

I looked at the moon and thought I saw the reflection of a snake in the grass, then I looked into the garden and it was there.

JAMES

A certain degree of uncertainty is given, there are no guarantees. Then add the complexities of any human being. You and I, we sit here and discuss butterflies not even touching on metamorphosis, because the process involved in migration alone is overwhelming. And that's the discussion of butterflies!

Beat.

What compels us I don't know. I am clear, go, don't go.

LUCA

How do they ever make it in the wind.

Beat.

Touch my hair. I've been taking in rain water from the garden for a rinse.

He caresses her hair for a moment then stops.

Why did you stop?

JAMES

I can't remember.

Referring to the newspaper.

There's nothing new.

LUCA

We did care once. Soon we'll both begin to forget, and then what?

JAMES

It doesn't continue like that Luca. There are instincts involved, things that don't leave. Why is there question? I can rest knowing that.

LUCA

What was-

JAMES

Not so different from now. Not the same.

Beat.

It's rain Luca. There's lightening, and thunder, and wind, and sometimes the sun will shine through, sometimes it will not, but then it is just dark, that's all. It's not over, it's not ending, it's just dark.

LUCA

Like now.

He kisses her hair and exits.

JAMES

Goodnight.

MOLINA gently wakes up GEORGE, they exit into the house, their light switches off. The night sky and subtle sounds of the forest. LUCA switches off her lamp.

SCENE THREE

Saturday, the next morning, dusk. MOLINA comes out of the house and makes her way to the stream. As the sky changes, she stretches. Lying back, she bathes herself in sunlight.

SCENE FOUR

Later that afternoon. JAMES sits in the armchair reading the newspaper. LUCA'S heard offstage of GEORGE'S house. She's talking to MOLINA and laughing.

LUCA

What, what's so funny? Aren't you pretty. Slow, pretty and slow. Molina.

They enter. MOLINA find a resting spot on the porch steps. GEORGE enters from the house, a dish towel hangs over his shoulder. He's holding a glass mixing bowl with a wooden spoon and flour in it. In his back pocket is a racing form.

GEORGE

Are you lost my girl?

MOLINA looks up at GEORGE then lies her head back down.

I said are you lost?

LUCA

I was walking and saw her-

GEORGE

Not my dog, you. Are you lost?

LUCA

No.

GEORGE

Do you live nearby?

LUCA

Yes.

GEORGE

Between here and the town?

LUCA

Yes.

GEORGE

The house up the road?

LUCA

Yes.

GEORGE

Good, you'll find your way back.

He starts to exit.

LUCA

I thought she was lost.

He stops.

GEORGE

Not her, doesn't happen. Sharp as a whip, lived here all her life.

LUCA

She's lovely.

LUCA makes a gesture to pet her then stops.

May I?

GEORGE

She could kill.

*LUCA kneels next to MOLINA and pets her.
GEORGE watches for a moment then turns
his head the other way.*

LUCA

Molina, such a pretty name, how'd you find it?

*He quickly goes inside the house and
returns without the bowl and towel.*

GEORGE

How did you know her name? I never mentioned it. Who are you?

LUCA

I live-

GEORGE

You've said as much. How do you know my dog's name?

Beat.

How do you know my dog's name!

No answer.

I don't know what you've got going on here but quickly, right now, tell me how in the hell do you know my dog's name?

LUCA

I was near here last night, early last night, dusk, there was music. She must have been lost, I heard you call.

Pause.

GEORGE

A man can't lose his dog. Quick as she is I still worry, the night you know. I'm George.

LUCA

Luca.

Beat.

Were you baking?

GEORGE

Zucchini bread. The end of the summer squash. My garden out back. I read today it's the time to plant garlic, but I've no need. No more tilling the soil. Zucchini, one of the last words in the dictionary. Do you garden?

LUCA

Some, well, house plants.

GEORGE

A census is taken here every ten years, nothing changes with exception to death. What moved you here?

LUCA

Inspiration.

GEORGE

Certainly these woods you'll find it. Mindful of dark, inspiration can become imagination, a dreadful and often uncontrollable thing.

LUCA

Not my inspiration.

GEORGE

Why not?

Beat.

LUCA

I've spoken to so few until today, until I met Molina.

GEORGE

She'll start a conversation for you. Often can't tell if it's her talking and me listening, or reverse. Not so much matter who speaks and who listens, we've said as much, and most likely at the point of repeating. Most likely at the point of, most likely at the point of repeating-

MOLINA lifts her head. Speaking to her, he touches her head and face.

God help us. My beautiful girl, did you find yourself a friend? Young women sometimes like to run together. Young women at times do run together, in the mind that is, and the trick of their names: Lara, Laura, Linda, but then of course there's Lillian, the always beautiful and forever more my Lillian. Have you heard of a word like Lillian? It is a garden and a water source in one. Names do hold rainbows. Not George, the ever practical, a man of the soil George, but Lillian...

He stares at the setting sun.

The loss of daylight, is there anything more painful?

GEORGE pulls the race form from his back pocket.

But today, God works in mysterious ways. Today, I have a race. Five twenty, a bet on number three across the board, and number four horse to win, takes me out of the oncoming dark, into my home, for the last of summer's baked squash, and undoubtedly a beautiful glass of gin. And, there is a chance then Molina though small, at the end of it

all I just might sleep.

Beat.

You, my Dear, slip into slumber without any help, only the quiet comfort of knowing.
Good night Luca, you'll find your way home.

GEORGE starts to exit.

LUCA

The Breeders' Cup?

He stops.

GEORGE

You know?

LUCA

Just noticed the headlines.

*JAMES puts down the news paper, stands,
stretches, and walks to the window.*

It is the time of year for garlic, at least where I'm from. Quite a ways south from here.
Though the climate is different there, much more humid. It may affect the soil, keeping it
moist. I've heard of, not done it, but people do plant garlic now, this time in the fall.

GEORGE

I've no use for it.

LUCA

It's great in-Winter can be a wonderful time for red sauce, zucchini can be a substitute for
more common things like ground beef.

Beat.

GEORGE

The zucchini has all been baked.

LUCA

This time of year the days grow so short.

GEORGE

They do.

LUCA

Something fantastic happening with the sunset though. I find a break in the trees, the horizon, and colors get magnificent. Where I'm from, the sky at this hour fills with pinks, purple, magenta. Here it seems more orange, yellow, reds. And I think sometimes I see green

GEORGE

I've seen green. You moved here not long ago?

LUCA

At the end of summer.

GEORGE

Summer's end. Last winter was cold. So cold. I was alone. You see, I'd lost my- But then of course there was Molina.

GEORGE and LUCA stand looking at the sunset.

The time between two absolutes. Not day not night. Not here, and not yet gone.

Pause.

It's awful. Molina.

GEORGE goes to the screen door and holds it open for MOLINA.

There's still a bit of light, you'll find your way home.

GEORGE exits, speaking to MOLINA.

It's time my Dear, it's time. Remember, you have a date with a horse.

SCENE FIVE

Later that night. Classical music plays softly from GEORGE'S home. MOLINA, lit by porch light, sleeps in her spot on the steps. LUCA enters her living room, she carries a glass of port wine. JAMES sits outside their window in the garden on the cement bench and, with the help of the living room light shining through the window, reads a book. LUCA watches him. She drinks. She hums the same song playing.

LUCA

A pitch that would crack this window.

She drinks.

Not my window, where else would life wash by. Thru the pages? On the page, turning thru today's, yesterday's, news.

She drinks.

Tomorrow could be better, should be, might be.

Beat.

Not all of what we had is lost.

She drinks.

Still fall. Where's the dry brittle winter when you're ready for something to break.

JAMES turns a page. LUCA finishes the wine and sets the glass on the end table.

Last night, in a dream, everything was very green, real green, like where I'm from, the kind of green you can't find here. I looked around and I felt hope. I dreamt last night and I felt fine. The colors were tropical, they said something. They spoke of a richness that I left behind to dry up in this-

*JAMES, reading, laughs then turns the page.
Pause.*

An exchange with a stranger has more emotion. You sit there with the page, day after day, turning, turning into what? A sacrifice James. Did you hear I used that word? My

life is draining outside this little town. This place, this place I had hoped to call a home has done nothing but distance me from everything I understood, everything consistent. And I've been in love with you, but it's brought me what? Blank stares. Maybe I've been wrong, focusing on you, what you will find. Why are you so far away? Why don't you touch me in the night? Did I leave what I knew to walk with a man who doesn't hear me? There was strength in that small city that housed me, corners, direction, not here, everything's undefined! And it was green, and the butterflies came through. You talk to me about reading, you talk about red sauce, you say everything except what I need to hear. And I'm stumbling. My hands are stretched in the night, I'm searching for a wall, structure, something to lean on, something to guide me. I would have never done this, I would have never come to this place by myself. You steered my course. It wasn't these woods, it wasn't wanderlust that made me leave where I was it was love. But then, to find a man calling for his wife in the night? Us, in relationship to them? I'm embarrassed to think we had more.

GEORGE cracks open the screen door.

MOLINA wakes and goes inside. He switches off the light.

SCENE SIX

The next morning, dusk. It's brisk. LUCA sleeps in the armchair. MOLINA exits her home and makes her way to the stream.

JAMES, visibly chilly, has been wandering in the woods with a pen and notepad. He comes upon MOLINA at the stream, is startled, and laughs nervously. Referencing Pavlov's bell he "dings" twice and laughs. MOLINA looks confused. He has a seat and starts writing.

JAMES

Nothing about you. Well nothing in particular. Actually there's not much going on here at all, research I mean. The book, don't worry, a practicality. May I draw you?

JAMES starts to sketch. He takes a close look at her face and smiles.

Your eyes are a very unusual color.

The sun has begun to shine and MOLINA does her ritual stretch and sun bath.

Funny to be sketching an animal again, that was quite early on. Typically they were much smaller specimens. Interesting though, I have been doing a lot of backstroking. In a position lately where I seem incapable of moving forward. Been thinking back through my training, all I've learned. What still fascinates me about Biology is evolution, because it is just that, it's evolving, ever changing, infinite. Why then, why, if that hypothesis is true, which it is, is there nothing new for me? Nothing specific for me to maybe, maybe one day, put my name on? You work hard. An end goal in mind. There's achievement, and expectation.

He completes the sketch and shows it to MOLINA. They both seem pleased.

For today I'll put my name on this.

He signs the sketch and looks at the sky.

Beautiful. It's been so long...

He lies back, putting the notebook under his head.

At what point can you tell yourself it's alright to just let it go.

SCENE SEVEN

Later that morning. LUCA, still in house clothes, enters the room with a cup of coffee. MOLINA waits outside the screen door for GEORGE to let her in. After a moment, JAMES enters the room abruptly.

JAMES

What a morning, what a morning! Luca, you have no idea.

He kisses her on the head. The kiss goes unnoticed by LUCA. JAMES starts enthusiastically pacing the room. GEORGE lets MOLINA in the house.

Oh, it's right there in my hand, this struggle, I understand it now. Like a bullet! A drum, clear as a bell. Here we are, here, all the way out here, searching for what? And you, I drug you from your city, your life, asking you to participate in this silly quest. Moving to this place, this stopping post, these woods. And you agreed, so kind, out of love, you agreed, and to what? You agreed to these last two months of living with a mad, angry man. Isolated, thinking only of himself, his overwhelming reality. Believing that moving far, far away from distraction, I would somehow find an incarnation, a beautiful idea. I believed that Luca, that is what I believed. Leave commotion, recover, search, find. And what happened? Stuck. Stuck, like iron wheels in mud. Motionless, nothing turned. So what I said? What. You are here, you are stuck here. Read through this. Read. Sit patiently and read through this lack of inspiration. And I did Luca, I did. Well you've seen, you've complained, I've ignored you, you've been wonderful, you've been nothing but that. And I'm almost sorry, except it worked. Coming here, and waiting through these last weeks, it's, at last, landed on my lap. There is nothing new Luca, not in my field, not now, or maybe just not from me. But that doesn't stop me from becoming who I will become. The inspiration is not out there.

Referring to the window.

Well, not for the case in point. These woods, this simplicity has taught me something about myself, I like it here. I like it here. Can you see, can't you, the foundation of things? I'm not talking the earth's core, we don't need to go that deep. I'm talking about life on top of itself, the layers of it. We, all of us, are not machines, organisms regenerate, reproduce, and there's the opportunity. And that is where it's endless. Every fact I want to find, need to know, falls out of itself. And the rules don't change!

He laughs.

They may, but don't. The laws of natural origin are just that, they're laws. Laws. Oh, the relief of structure, with evolution at a snail's pace. And interdependence. Luca, the way that life needs life. The way we rely, feed on each other. And responsiveness! Organisms sensing environmental change and adapting. And heredity, and reproduction! And me! Searching for a great big point of completion to send me on my way. I used reason and found it! And it's nothing new, it's not about a new idea. It's about having something you believe in, or want to believe in, and researching facts, theorists, who think and want that same truth, and have spent their time and lives trying to prove it.

Letting out a deep sigh.

The work went Luca, my work, what I do, was gone. It became ambiguous, no longer concrete, and I've been inconsolable, frustrated. But today, in a breeze, like a light in the night, bam! I saw it, and it wasn't new, but it was not without passion. And it's only a matter of gathering data, thinking critically, and being able to communicate myself. Kiss me.

He goes to LUCA.

Kiss me.

She lets him kiss her. He touches her hair.

I want to marry you.

She lets him kiss her again. He brushes her hair from her face.

Luca, will you let me?

Pause. She leaves the chair.

LUCA

James?

JAMES

Yes.

LUCA

Do you know how to bake?

JAMES

No.

LUCA

Do you believe in God?

JAMES

Luca, I'm a scientist.

Pause.

LUCA

Last night in a dream there was a warm and sunny field. It wasn't like here, it was a prairie, a pasture maybe, with small and sort of rolling hills. I looked around and was surrounded by flowers, yellow, with what seemed black buttons sewn in their centers. I felt the breeze and the sun. I didn't want to wake up.

JAMES

Luce, together in the field? Together?

Beat.

LUCA

There's a story about a little girl who lived alone on an island. Her parents were in a ship wreck, her father died. Her mother, then pregnant, found her way to the island. She had the little girl and raised her, and all the while told her stories about the love she had for her husband, the girl's father. The mother died and girl lived on. She was not lonely, because she'd learned about love.

JAMES

You're not doing this Luca. You are not defining our reality with a stupid dream and a fairy tale! You act like these affairs come at no cost! Two people just find each other and then what? The little girl's father probably died at twenty-five. My life expectancy is almost four times that. And guess what, we are in the middle of the woods, there are no islands here. Be reasonable.

LUCA

No! Your reason has no place in my world.

LUCA exits. He calls after her.

JAMES

Believing in God is not a prerequisite to being a good husband! Do I bake.

JAMES kicks the arm chair then sits.

GEORGE and MOLINA enter through the screen door. He's reading the Bible aloud

and making his way across the porch to sit on a step. MOLINA doing the same, stops at different flower pots.

GEORGE

“The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of His hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.
There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the end of the world.”

MOLINA walks down the porch steps starting to exit. GEORGE touches her head without looking up. MOLINA stops in her path and stares. LUCA enters wearing the same house clothes but with a jacket over it. She's having trouble catching her breath and seems confused.

LUCA

There was something I wanted to ask you. I can't remember. Were you praying? I wondered if you prayed. We've lived here these weeks. I'm too old to make such poor choices. James, I know now. That night, I heard you call out, your wife, the things you said, she must have meant so much.

She starts to cry.

I've never been certain, it's not my nature. But this, this one thing must be real, time has its limit, you can't waste yourself on someone who doesn't try and reach you.

Beat.

GEORGE

Lost people often find uncompassionate ears. You walk over here half dazed and disrupt my Sunday morning? You eavesdrop on my sorrow, and vomit a sentimental version of my marriage! Do you understand what that word means? I can tell you what it implies, what it implies is something sacred. Don't mention my wife! You can't comprehend what she means to me. You're a stranger, you trespass on my home! Time does have its limit, that fact is what I breathe.

He starts to leave.

I live in the middle of nowhere for a very specific reason, your small pilgrimages have done nothing but disrupt that.

GEORGE exits. JAMES exits. LUCA falls to the porch and sits with her face in her hands. MOLINA crosses to LUCA and touches LUCA'S head with her cheek.

SCENE EIGHT

Later that same day. MOLINA and LUCA are at the stream. JAMES sits on the cement bench in the garden reading the newspaper. GEORGE enters carrying a small brown lunch bag.

GEORGE

Newspapers, sense or nonsense. What's new?

JAMES

Actually, there's quite a meteor shower tonight our area, assuming you live nearby. I'm James.

JAMES stands and shakes his hand.

GEORGE

George.

JAMES

These woods will be fantastic. The weather should hold. And a new moon, how fortunate.

GEORGE references the paper.

GEORGE

A new moon you said.

JAMES

So technically no moon tonight.

GEORGE references the paper.

GEORGE

Today's date?

JAMES

The first.

GEORGE

An anniversary of mine, the day I got my dog.

JAMES

Pack animals, how's the joke? Why is dog man's best friend? Because he has no choice. Biology.

JAMES laughs.

You leave a dog home alone, and he cries. Genetically not solitary animals.

GEORGE

Not her, not today anyway, haven't seen her since this morning. Maybe I'm the pack animal, so desperate for company, crying at her absence. The only house down the road is mine should you happen to-

He takes a deep breath.

Not the reason I've come here though.

Noticing the ground.

Are you planting something?

JAMES

That's Luca. She's begun some sort of a garden. Garlic, maybe?

GEORGE

That's why I've come.

JAMES

Luca? She's out. Can help you, we, the two of us, live here together.

GEORGE rubs his forehead seeming to collect his thought.

GEORGE

Do you understand the significance of bread?

JAMES

Bread?

JAMES laughs.

A necessity in most cultures. Made with flour, water, sometimes a rising agent. Oh, bread, a synonym for money.

GEORGE

What I mean is, I owe her an apology. Please extend that from me, and offer her this.

Handing him the small brown bag.

Baked yesterday.

JAMES

You've spoken to her?

GEORGE

I have.

JAMES

When?

GEORGE

This morning, she interrupted a sort of, though that wasn't the first time that we've met. It seems she's awfully bored, seeking me out. Not the best of company. Afraid I was rude. Not sure exactly what she was looking for... Women, I have a terrible tendency to dismiss them. One particular woman sort of rose through the dust. But she's here no longer, and I can't seem to remember the perfect, her eyes, a color, they were-

He yells, startling JAMES.

Damn it where is my dog!

JAMES

Your dog? I've been sitting here for most of the day. What does she look like?

GEORGE

She is old, frail limbs, she must have plenty of water.

JAMES

Maybe you should sit.

GEORGE

Molina, she is black with golden eyes, her ears lie down the sides of her face.

JAMES

I saw her.

GEORGE

Where?

JAMES

It was yesterday-

GEORGE

I've seen her since.

JAMES

There are no cars on the road here. Dogs are very, very resourceful animals. There's still light left in the day. Maybe try and remain calm. There's a very good chance she can find her way.

GEORGE

It will be dark, there is no moon. And what will happen then? Molina, as bright as they come and still... As real as they are, as human, she's not burdened with the responsibility of choice. We stand, stumble for direction, while they quietly, knowing naturally, what is right and what is not right.

JAMES

Would you like some water?

GEORGE

It is that obvious. It won't remove these marks. I made a choice once...

He smiles.

Encouraged by the voice of a woman, and we married. Fate had to have been what removed her, because there was no choice there. Her death, I did not make that choice.

JAMES touches GEORGE'S shoulder and speaking quietly.

JAMES

But that's a biological function.

GEORGE does not respond.

Life continues. There's no beginning, there's no end, imagine a continuum where- It's like the sky tonight, an explosion then forever forward.

GEORGE

And that means nothing to a man lying awake in the dark. Do you pray?

Beat.

JAMES

I could try.

GEORGE starts to exit and stops.

GEORGE

I've given you the bread. Simple routine suits me best. I've apologized for my abruptness. Perhaps it's best I no longer get visitors.

He exits.

JAMES

Bread and an apology. But I have no idea where she is.

JAMES watches GEORGE exit then sits.

MOLINA enters heading toward the porch.

LUCA, looking exhausted, follows.

MOLINA finds a spot and LUCA kneels

beside her, stroking her face. MOLINA

stretches and closes her eyes, LUCA lies on

the porch steps and puts her arm around

her. They fall asleep.

SCENE NINE

Later that night. JAMES sits on the bench in the garden and periodically looks up at the sky. MOLINA and LUCA are asleep on the porch steps. GEORGE quietly moves about the porch pruning the plants. Classical music plays softly from inside the house. MOLINA stretches disrupting LUCA who then stretches and lies on her back staring up at the sky. GEORGE stands over them.)

GEORGE

Awake now ladies?

(LUCA, looking startled and disorientated, sits up. MOLINA watches LUCA.)

LUCA

She was lost George, I think, or did I dream.

GEORGE

Not lost, not my Molina.

LUCA

No, you're right. We wandered off this morning, after leaving here. She led me down the road. I heard a stream. We left the road, walked through a sort of a ditch, and there it was.

He pets MOLINA'S face.

GEORGE

A little stopping spot of hers I'm sure. Leave a not next time won't you.

Beat.

LUCA

I'm sorry for what I heard, for intruding. I wish for you, I know you're hurting, and easier said, but the past George, it can be too painful.

GEORGE

You can't live there, and you can't forget it either, it's what my faith and I grapple with.

Beat.

You had disrupted my refuge, what seems to almost determine whether or not I'm going to make it. Showing up in the midst of an unsatisfactory, a lovers' quarrel-

LUCA

Don't trivialize, I -

GEORGE

I'm not here to understand. My wife is dead. This is not decision making time, this is not poor choices. Everything I had is gone.

MOLINA lifts her head, pause, he touches her face.

Please don't leave again. I am a young man growing old and would lose fast without you.

LUCA sits looking up at the sky. She speaks to herself.

LUCA

Tomorrow, could be better, should be... might be.

The lights in the sky explode. JAMES, looking up to the sky, stands. LUCA, looking up to the sky, stands.

GEORGE

A meteor shower, tonight. I saw your garden

LUCA looks in the direction of her house.

Molina, let's see this spot of yours. Its dark I know, there's no moon. We'll make it by the light of the stars. What's that?

He leans close to her.

The moon will rise again tomorrow. The moon, the moon and his effect on women.

LUCA exits. GEORGE and MOLINA start to walk.

One day, is that too clichéd for you my girl? My girl with the wandering feet, but never a wandering heart. All alone in the woods lived a lost little dog, until one day, she was found by my wife...

Pause.

Her eyes... I can't remember. I can't forget

*LUCA enters the garden. Silence. MOLINA
and GEORGE arrive at the stream. Silence.
The sky explodes. Light out.*

VITA

Whitney Lee Buss was born in Yankton, South Dakota.